

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. **(currently amended)** A method for separating a lump piece of a rosette plant, said method comprising the steps of:
  - gripping a said rosette plant and positioning it said rosette plant parallel to a longitudinal axis of an elongated holder, which comprises a longitudinal opening at least along the longitudinal axis;
  - introducing a part of the lump piece of said rosette plant into the holder via the mentioned by way of said longitudinal opening;
  - cutting off the lump piece along a cutting plane parallel to the longitudinal axis, while closing the longitudinal opening, such so that the introduced part of the cut-off lump piece is enclosed in the holder; and
  - removing the enclosed cut-off part of the lump piece from the holder.
  
2. **(currently amended)** A The method according to claim 1, characterized in that the method comprises the further step of further comprising cutting off a cut-off part of the lump

piece of the rosette plant enclosed in the holder along a second cutting plane.

3. **(currently amended)** AThe method according claim 1, characterized in thatwherein the removal from the holder takes place while retaining orientation.

4. **(currently amended)** AThe method according to claim 1, characterized in thatwherein the cutting off of the lump piece is carried outperformed by the rotation of two half-round sections engaging each other along a rotation axis, during which the sections cuttingly glide along each other, such that after rotation the sections form a cylinder in which the cut-off part of the lump piece is received.

5. **(currently amended)** AThe method according claim 1, characterized in thatthe method comprises the further comprising a step of blowing out the cut-off part of the lump piece enclosed in the holder by means ofusing compressed air.

6. **(currently amended)** An apparatus for separating a lump piece of a rosette plant, said apparatus comprising:  
- an elongated holder which comprises a longitudinal opening at least along the longitudinal axis; and

- a first cutting element for cutting off a lump piece of said rosette plant along a cutting plane parallel to the longitudinal axis, while closing the longitudinal opening, such so that an introduced part of the cut-off lump piece is enclosed in the holder.

7. (currently amended) An The apparatus according to claim 6, characterized in thatwherein the apparatus comprises a transverse opening which is oriented transversely to the longitudinal axis.

8. (currently amended) An The apparatus according to claim 7, characterized in thatwherein the apparatus comprises a second cutting element for cutting off a part of the rosette plant enclosed in the holder along a second cutting plane transversely to the longitudinal axis, while closing the transverse opening.

9. (currently amended) An The apparatus according to claim 6, characterized in thatwherein the holder has such a cross-section and is arranged so that, when in an enclosed condition, the cut-off part-lump piece is clampingly enclosed, so that upon removal a the cut-off part-lump piece retains its orientation.

10. (currently amended) An The apparatus according to claim 6, characterized in thatwherein the elongated holder comprises a first half-round section, and that the first cutting element comprises a second half-round section, which first and second sections engage each other along a rotation axis and, upon rotation, carry out a cutting movement, such so that after rotation the sections form a cylinder in which a part of a the cut-off lump piece can be received.

11. (currently amended) An The apparatus according to claim 10, characterized in thatwherein the sections are arranged to carry out an axial movement relative to each other during the rotation.

12. (currently amended) An The apparatus according to claim 6, characterized in thatwherein the apparatus comprises an expelling element for removing the enclosed cut-off part of the lump piece from the holder.

13. (currently amended) An The apparatus according to claim 12, characterized in thatwherein the expelling element is arranged to expel the cut-off part-lump piece along the longitudinal axis of the holder.

14. (currently amended) An The apparatus according to claim 13, characterized in that wherein the expelling element comprises an outflow longitudinal opening oriented along the longitudinal axis of the holder for blowing out compressed air.

15. (currently amended) An The apparatus according to claim 14, characterized in that wherein the outflow longitudinal opening is provided in the a second cutting element, so that the second cutting element, after having carried out a cutting movement and having cut-off stems from the lump piece, positions the outflow longitudinal opening such so that the cut-off part-lump piece can be blown out by means of using compressed air.

16. (currently amended) An The apparatus according to claim 8, characterized in that wherein the second cutting element is connected to a backplane of the apparatus with a pair of parallel-arranged leaf springs.

17. (previously presented) An automated apparatus, comprising:  
- image recognition means for identifying a rosette plant to be multiplied;

- a gripper for gripping the rosette plant and positioning it;
- an apparatus according to claim 6, which cuts off and encloses the rosette plant;
- transport and manipulation means for transporting and manipulating ~~the-a~~ growing medium, into which the cut-off ~~cutting~~ plant is introduced; and
- control means for controlling the gripper, the apparatus, and the transport and manipulation means under control of the image recognition means.

18. (new) The method of claim 3, wherein the orientation means that the sprout of said lump piece remains pointing in a direction remove from a growing medium.

19. (new) The method of claim 9, wherein the orientation means that the sprout of said lump piece remains pointing in a direction remove from a growing medium.